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PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS

VOL. 29 JULY 31, 1914 No. 31

PLAGUE IN NEW ORLEANS.

Up to the time the Public Health Reports went to press last week there had been reported in New Orleans 9 cases of plague in man and 6 in rats. Since then there have been reported 4 cases in man and 15 in rodents.

The human cases were as follows:

Case 10, W. E., white, male, aged 50 years; place of business, 600 Fulton Street, corner Lafayette; occupation, saloon keeper; residence, 4528 Constance Street, between Jena and Cadiz; sickened July 21.

Case 11, J. S., white, male, aged 41 years; occupation, janitor; employed at 532 Camp Street, where cases 6 and 9 occurred; residence, 1023 Melpomene Street; sickened July 24; femoral bubo.

Case 12, J. E. W., male, colored, aged 24 years; residence, 1526 Arts Street; employed at 611 Commerce Street, between Lafayette and Girod Streets; sickened July 23; femoral and inguinal bubo.

Case 13, R. S., female, aged 16 years; residence, 1809 Bienville Street, between North Roman and North Derbigny Streets; employed at 1904 Bienville Street; sickened July 22; femoral bubo.

The circumstances connected with the reported plague-infected rodents were as follows:

Rodent case 7, rat captured at 819 Antonine Street, between Laurel and Annunciation Streets, July 20.

Rodent case 8, rat captured at 511 St. Ann Street, between Decatur and Chartres Streets, July 21.

Rodent case 9, rat captured at 1531 Magazine Street, between Race and Orange Streets, July 22.

Rodent case 10, rat captured at 117 North Liberty Street, between Canal and Iberville Streets.

Rodent case 11, rat captured at 1171 Annunciation Street, between Gainnie and Erato Streets.

Rodent case 12, rat captured at 518 Barracks Street, between Decatur and Chartres Streets.

Rodent case 13, rat captured at Stuyvesant docks, elevator E, Louisiana Avenue and river, July 23.

Rodent case 14, rat captured at 1823 Second Street, between Baronne and Dryades Streets, July 21.

Rodent case 15, rat captured at Toulouse Street shed of the Southern Pacific docks.

Rodent case 16, rat captured at Marais and Bourbon Streets.

Rodent case 17, rat captured at 1031 Chartres Street, between Ursuline and St. Philip, July 22.

Rodent case 18, rat captured at 1308 Girod Street, between Franklin and Liberty Streets, July 22.

Rodent case 19, rat captured at Toulouse Street wharf July 22.

Rodent case 20, rat captured at 930 Tchopitoulas Street between Saint Joseph and Howard Streets, July 24.

Rodent case 21, rat captured at Bienville Street landing July 27.

The infection among the rats appears to be widely disseminated, and it will be necessary to make a rodent survey of the entire city.

Special ordinances have been adopted regarding the rat proofing of buildings, the maintenance of chickens, the disposal of garbage, and the fending off of ships.

MORBIDITY REPORTS.

A STRIKING ILLUSTRATION OF THEIR NECESSITY.

An epidemiologist was recently sent to a city to investigate a reported outbreak of typhoid fever. To quote from his report:

> Arriving in ———, I reported to the local health officer, from whom I obtained such fragmentary reports as were on file in his office. These reports being insufficient to indicate whether or not typhoid fever was epidemic or unusually prevalent in the city, it became necessary to obtain case reports by personal canvas of the physicians of the city, which was accordingly begun at once.
>
> From a canvas of practically every physician in the city we obtained records of the cases of typhoid which had occurred since January 1, 1914 * * *.
>
> No reliable records were available to show the usual prevalence of typhoid fever; consequently it was not possible to make an accurate comparison of the prevalence this year as compared with corresponding seasons of previous years.

This illustrates how futile it is for a health department to attempt to control disease unless it has the information of the occurrence of cases furnished by physicians' reports. The health department in this city was not only not able to control the disease, but was not even in a position to know whether the disease was unusually prevalent or epidemic.

Whatever the work done by a health department may be under these conditions, it is certainly not the controlling of disease. The visiting epidemiologist, in order to secure some idea of the status of typhoid fever, found it necessary to make a canvas of the practicing physicians and get from them such information regarding cases as was a matter of record or memory. With proper notification of cases, reliable data recorded at a time when the facts in the case were ascertained and while memory was fresh, would have been at hand and would have shown the current prevalence of disease as compared with previous times, the location of cases, and their chronological and geographic relationship to each other, and much other information of the greatest epidemiologic value.

No health department, State or local, can effectively prevent or control disease without knowledge of when, where, and under what conditions cases are occurring.